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ABSTRACT

Based on a program which was developed in Maine, this guide provides specific suggestions for establishing a new "tradition" of substance-free celebration at graduation and prom parties for high school students. An introduction discusses the dangers of drinking at high school parties, the benefits of alcohol and drug-free parties, and possible "spinoffs" of Project Graduation parties. Key elements of Project Graduation are listed (e.g., target groups, basic rules, suggestions for community support and planning groups), and examples of substance-free graduation and prom party possibilities are provided. A section on public awareness discusses ways to raise community and student conciousness about the problems of parties that provide alcohol. Methods of increasing student and parent interest and media involvement are listed, along with fund raising suggestions. A section on legal support issues, a list of ways to keep the party substance-free, a list of "miscellaneous success maximizers," and a list of local Iowa resources are also provided. Five appendices include: descriptions of Iowa Project Graduation parties, sample media releases and promotional letters, Iowa drinking and driving data, and excerpts from relevant Iowa law. (BH)

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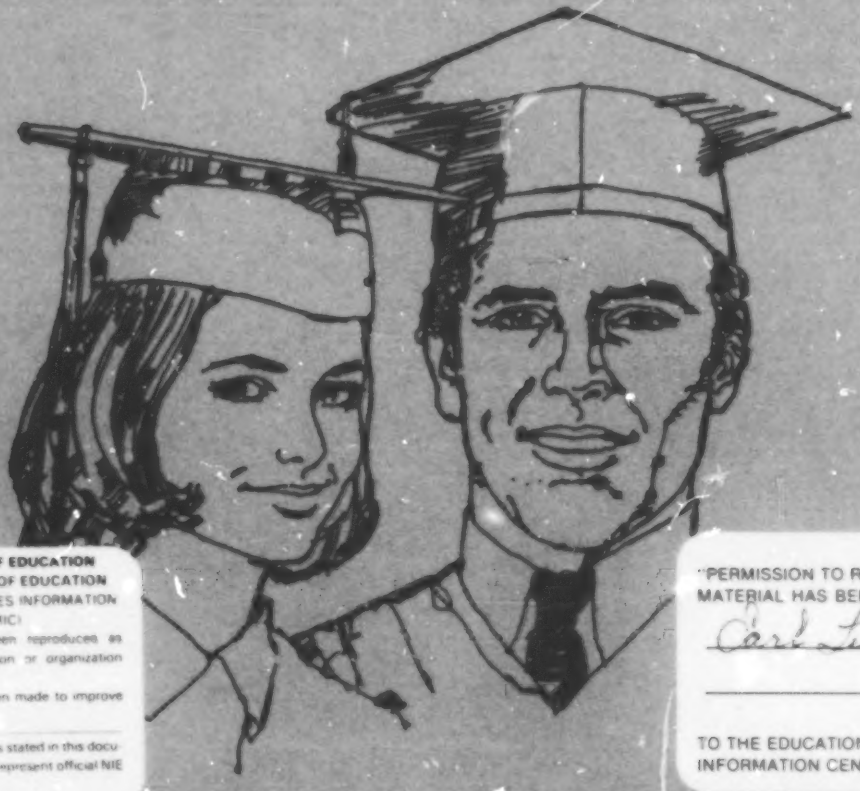
Project Graduation



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"A Celebration for Life"

David A. Wright
Iowa Department of Public Instr.

Tips on starting a tradition of graduation celebrations without alcohol, drugs, and accidents!

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Project Graduation

"A Celebration for Life"

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Introduction

High school graduation is a time of celebration, decision making and growth for young people. Unfortunately, many young people decide to celebrate their prom night or graduation by drinking alcohol and using substances. Too often, this decision has disastrous results.

You can help young people break this "tradition." This Project Graduation planning guide provides you with ideas, resources, fund-raising and promotion tips and more.

Project Graduation was developed in Maine, where it has been quite successful. It started in one school as a way to stem the deaths and disabilities associated with drinking, taking drugs and driving. Now, Maine schools statewide hold successful substance-free parties.

We've taken a good idea and made it better: this planning guide can be modified to apply to both prom and graduation celebrations. Last year, at least 150 Iowa schools sponsored Project Graduation parties with great success.

Helping Yourselves

This statewide campaign is designed to help youth, parents, schools and communities help themselves. Iowa communities have a sense of identity, a history of independence, and a tradition of dealing with issues and problems locally. Local planning, organization, promotion and fund raising are necessary to successfully implement this idea. Local committees of youth, parents, school personnel and community leaders will certainly produce their own variations of Project Graduation as they tailor these ideas to fit their needs.

Benefits

The primary benefit of Project Graduation for Iowans is a reduction in the number of young people and their families involved in the tragedies of drinking-and-driving accidents. Until 1984, an average of eight young Iowans were killed in drinking-and-driving accidents each May and June. Another 132 were injured, and a total of 304 were involved in drinking-and-driving accidents during this period. Usually, the most tragic accidents related to prom or graduation celebrations.

Last year, however, with the widespread implementation of Project Graduation in the state, only one young Iowan died as a result of a drinking-and-driving accident.

Most important, Project Graduation involves establishing a new "tradition" in many communities. High school students and adults can learn through a concrete example that it is possible to have a good time at a party without drinking or using drugs. In many Maine communities, the substance-free party idea has transcended graduation night, and now includes proms, end-of-sport-season parties, and other special activities. An organizer of Maine's efforts, Corinne Allen, best summarized what is happening in her state when she said, "The trend is moving away from the tradition of drinking being acceptable. Students who choose not to use (drugs or alcohol) receive support for that decision throughout the year."

Spinoffs

Project Graduation is a tangible event that provides an easy starting point for beginning a new tradition of substance-free celebrations. However, highway traffic safety reports indicate that July and August are also prime months for teen drinking-and-driving accidents. Consider sponsoring substance-free parties during the summer months, before the start of school, at the end of a sports season, over the winter holidays or at any other time that might encourage students to consider their alternatives in celebrating.

Endorsers of Project Graduation in Iowa

State Government

Department of Public Instruction
Governor's Highway Safety Office
Youth Coordinator's Office
Department of Substance Abuse
Department of Public Safety
Department of Health

Education Groups

Educational Administrators of Iowa
Iowa Association of School Administrators
Iowa Association of School Boards
Iowa Congress of Parents and Teachers
Iowa State Education Association

AAA Motor Club of Iowa

Acknowledgements

The following persons and communities piloted Project Graduation substance-free events and shared their experience for this guide.

Supt. Keith Hopkins. . .Ankeny Community School District
Delores Greenough. . .Spencer Community School District
Supt. Richard Boyer. . .Algona Community School District

The state of Maine offered the concept of Project Graduation and was quite generous in sharing ideas and experiences. Special thanks go to:

Janice Isaly, Coordinator
Alcohol, Other Drugs and Highway Safety Program
Maine Department of Education and Cultural Services
Augusta, Maine

How to Use this Guide

The remainder of this guide provides some specific suggestions for successfully implementing Project Graduation. Suggestions are provided for the various tasks a community committee should accomplish (e.g. possible activities, publicity and fund raising). These suggestions have been used in communities in Maine and Iowa.

Components of Project Graduation

Project Graduation is a remarkably simple idea: students, parents, school persons and community leaders plan and carry out prom or graduation celebrations that are free of alcohol or other drug use.

Communities can offer an alternate method of celebrating special occasions. In many communities, this substance-free party is in stark contrast to a "tradition" of student- or parent-sponsored drinking or "kegger" parties. Implementing a local version of Project Graduation will often involve changing many established norms, attitudes and behaviors related to alcohol and other drug use.

Key Elements of Project Graduation

Target Groups

Juniors and seniors, their parents and guests

Time Period

February - April for planning and promotion; May-June for prom and commencement activities

Objectives

Prevent deaths and injuries associated with drinking, taking other drugs and driving; establish a new "tradition" of substance-free celebrations

Methods

Involve students and their guests in entertaining and satisfying activities as a means for celebrating a special event

Basic Rules of Graduation/Prom Parties

Obey state laws*
Observe decent behavior
No use of alcohol or other drugs
Anyone showing the effects of intoxication or in possession of a substance is held and their parents summoned to pick them up.

* (Most Maine communities insist that local law enforcement personnel arrest persons who violate drinking-and-driving laws.)

Community Support

Use of facilities (e.g. school, YMCA, clubs)
Funding by civic groups and businesses
Parent contributions (e.g. time, influence, money)
Parent chaperones
Media publicity (e.g. public service announcements, newspaper articles, interviews)

Community Planning Committee

Students
Parents
School persons
Civic leaders
Law enforcement representatives

Safe Transportation

Planners must consider safe transportation to and from activities

Tasks for Community Planning Committee

Develop local project title or theme
Initiate local publicity campaign
Promote concepts to students, parents and community groups
Raise funds
Design schedule and contract for activities
Distribute public information about non-substance celebrations
Coordinate the event with law enforcement persons

Graduation/Prom Party Possibilities

Possibilities for parties are limited only by the imagination (and fund-raising efforts) of the organizers. The following lists provide some ideas about settings and activities, and examples of parties.

Settings
School facilities
City parks and recreation centers
YMCA/YWCA
Elk/Moose/Masonic, etc. halls
Country clubs
Racquet clubs
Camps
Colleges, universities, area school campuses
Local attractions like rivers and lakes

Themes
Casino night
Western rodeo
50's era
Circus

Activities
Music: live bands, DJ's, sing-a-longs
Entertainers: comics, clowns, magicians
Dancing and dance contests
Class histories: slide shows, skits, legacies
Food: dinners, cookouts, buffets, snacks, breakfasts
Games: arcade games, video games, casino, pool, waterslide, miniature golf
Athletics: tennis, racquetball, volleyball, bowling, roller-skating, table tennis, water polo, swimming, weight room, saunas

Examples

The following are examples of the way some communities have carried out their parties.

- All-night party at YMCA — live music until 1:00 a.m. and a DJ until 5:00 a.m.; access to all facilities at the YMCA.
- All-night party at country club after graduation — buffet supper, live band, swimming, video games, breakfast.
- All-night party at high school — chicken barbeque, live band, hot air balloon rides, horror films, door prizes, table tennis, volleyball, breakfast.
- All-night party at a racquet club — volleyball, table tennis, dancing, racquetball, use of exercise room, video games, VCR films, floor hockey, breakfast.
- All-night party at high school — dancing, casino night, door prizes, breakfast.

Public Awareness

Parents and students are more appreciative and interested in participating in activities they have helped plan. People also actively participate in activities they understand and support. Peer influence, whether the peers are students, parents, faculty or community, can be a positive force in promoting and conducting non-substance parties.

School Administrator Involvement

Send letters to seniors encouraging participation in the graduation party.
Send letters to parents asking them to get involved and encourage their youth to attend a substance-free prom or graduation party.
Send letters to civic organizations asking them to send a representative to an introductory meeting.
Call a meeting of students, parents, faculty, local law officers and representatives of civic groups to discuss alternatives.
Turn party plans over to a student committee after the first meeting.

Classroom Teacher Activities

Encourage seniors to discuss the pros and cons of the party.
Promote discussion of the fact that classmates need to take responsibility for each other and not allow friends to drive under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.
Have students develop a theme for the project and prepare posters, "T shirt decals," buttons, and other advertisements for the party.
Conduct simulations of the substance-free party in class, including planning the party.
Use computer simulation of drinking-driving decisions ("Kegger" — disc available from Governor's Highway Safety Office — free duplication service).

Knowledge Deficiencies Are a Factor

A factor that appears to play a role in drinking and driving behavior is the lack of accurate information concerning alcohol. Studies of adult and youth drivers have revealed knowledge deficiencies in the following areas:

effects of alcohol on the processes involved in drinking.
amount of alcohol needed to produce impairment and legal intoxication.
alcoholic content of various drinks.
time required to oxidize alcohol.
ineffectiveness of popular methods for "sobering up."
penalties for drinking and driving offenses.
nature and effectiveness of chemical tests, and laws relating to their use.

A particularly troublesome lack of knowledge concerns the term "partying" and alcohol. Most young people interpret the use of alcohol and other drugs as the reason for having a "party." Alcohol and other drugs are the focus of the party. Information about and examples of substance-free parties can help to refocus on the enjoyment of pleasurable activities and interactions with other people.

Some parents who sponsor drinking parties for minors are unaware of their moral and legal responsibilities for the health and safety of their minor guests. The following are some typical excuses parents have offered for serving alcoholic beverages to minors:

> "I'd rather have the kids drink here—it's safer."
>
> "It's my kid's turn to have a party and all her friends have had a keg at their parties—it's expected."
>
> "We won't serve hard liquor, just beer."
>
> "All the parents allow it. We don't want our kids to feel different."
>
> "If my kid doesn't drink at home, he'll go somewhere else and do it."
>
> "I'd rather know what's going on."
>
> "High school kids are under a lot of pressure these days. Beer is part of their culture. I want our son to think of us as friends."

All of the above topics could be assigned to students for research, and the findings reported to the class before the celebration of prom or graduation.

Creating Student and Parent Interest

Some conflicts can be expected whenever change is suggested, and with that comes a challenge. Substance-free parties are often difficult to promote because alcohol and other drug use has become a community tradition with many of our youth during prom and/or graduation celebrations. This is one tradition that needs to be reversed. Some ways to minimize conflict and maximize success follow.

Student Involvement

Invite students from all segments of the senior class to an introductory meeting.
Offer several options for the school/community sponsored party and let them choose.
Encourage students to form work committees.
Encourage students to conduct a student promotion and publicity campaign.
Show the film, "The Last Prom" in an assembly or in smaller groups. Other films could be used.
Distribute party invitations after showing a film.
A broad cross-section of the student body should be involved in planning, fund raising, and conducting the party.

Parent Involvement

Invite parents of graduating seniors to an introductory meeting.
-Telephone each parent.
-Ask parent-teacher organizations to contact them.
Show them a film and discuss non-substance parties and alternate activities.
Alert them to their responsibility for preventing their youth from drinking and driving.
Emphasize that the party is a parent-, student- and community-sponsored event.
Encourage them to get involved in some specific tasks involved in the activity.
Distribute a "fact sheet" concerning the party to parents.
Develop a handout entitled "Ten Ways for Saying No to Sponsoring a Drinking Party for Teens." Some parents have difficulty in saying no to their child's request to host a drinking/"kegger" party.

Media Involvement

School districts and communities that have held substance-free graduation parties found that media involvement was crucial to the success of the campaign, particularly the fund-raising efforts. Some suggestions follow. (Examples of media releases are included in Appendix B.)

1. Invite reporters from local radio stations and newspapers to interview students.
2. Student publicity committee visits radio stations and newspapers to ask for help in promoting a substance-free prom or graduation party.
3. Students write press releases and send to media.
4. Use billboards and posters to promote the party.
5. Students write news articles that describe the party and participants' responses.
6. Place a thank you notice in the newspaper listing those who donated time and money.
7. Encourage local media to cover your party. A story about the event will promote the idea for next year.
8. Appoint a publicity chairperson or committee to interact with local media.

Fund Raising

Unless your school district or community has a large budget for such activities, fund raising is a *must*. Although it seemed a monumental task at the outset, all districts/communities reported success in raising most or all of the money they needed. Fund raising by students and parents helps to ensure their investment in the success of the party. The following fund-raising suggestions have worked.

1. Write press releases explaining the project and mentioning the need for donations.
2. Contact the chamber of commerce and ask that they contact local businesses for donations.
3. Send letters to local businesses requesting donations.
4. Send letters to parents requesting a donation of $5 or $10.
5. Students can ask parents to donate food.
6. Students can ask school employees for donations.
7. Students can solicit door to door at homes and businesses with identifying letter in hand.
8. Parents might solicit from civic organizations.
9. Parents or students could solicit food from churches.
10. Ask your city to donate the use of buses if a trip is planned.
11. Solicit food and drinks from fast food restaurants.
12. Decorate coffee cans in school colors and place in local stores for collections.
13. Hold bake sales.
14. Ask the cafeteria crew to make salads, breads and desserts.
15. Include a list of contributors in the graduation program.
16. Ask local businesses to sponsor radio announcements.

Legal Support

Many people do not know the legal constraints on adolescent parties, liability for damages, driving restrictions and substances. Unfortunately, tragedies have been the primary impetus for raising public awareness. Substance-free parties are a method to raise public awareness and support for legal sanctions before a tragedy occurs. Asking for support and involvement from law enforcement officials is essential.

1. Inform local law enforcement officers of any plans being made pertaining to keg parties.
2. Ask law officers to enforce the laws. Support them for doing so.
3. Invite them to attend the first planning meeting to discuss the laws and their willingness to enforce them.
4. Notify civic organizations of the illegality of renting space for alcohol parties for minors.
5. If parents express their concern to school officials about planned keg parties, ask them to notify the police.
6. If parents are reluctant, then report the parties yourself so that the party sponsors can be apprised of the law.
7. It is better to get the party cancelled ahead of time than to send angry (and perhaps drinking) drivers out on the road. The name of the game is prevention.

Keeping the Party Substance-Free

The following suggestions have worked to keep parties substance-free.

1. Students choose chaperones from parents and staff.
2. Identification is required at the door.
   a. Present tickets obtained from the high school office beforehand.
   b. Wear buttons obtained when pre-registering.
   c. Circle picture of self within class picture.
3. Students are checked at the door for alcohol and other drugs.
4. If alcohol or other drugs are discovered, hold the student until parents pick him or her up.
5. Students can serve as security guards to prevent party crashing.
6. If a trip is planned, notify parents of students who pre-registered but do not arrive at the bus.
7. Enforce a "lock-in" rule — once a student is admitted he or she stays at the activity until he or she decides to go home.

Miscellaneous Success Maximizers

Some suggestions do not fit neatly into any other categories, but they are important.

1. Be sure to include students in the planning process. They know what they want.
2. Hold the party on graduation night/prom night.
3. Plan to have the substance-free party last until at least 1 a.m. to minimize the chance of students leaving and going to a keg party.
4. Plan to have the party end before 4 a.m., particularly if it is being held away from home.
5. Try to have the schedule well-filled so as to avoid too much "drag time."
6. Invite the seniors to decide whether younger students will be allowed to attend.
7. If the party is on a week night, it may minimize the number of younger students able to attend.
8. Ask the students if they would like to invite parents and teachers.
9. If there is to be a band, book early for best selection.
10. Door prizes (donated) may be given away, saving the best until last and requiring that students be present to win.
11. A breakfast may need to be offered before 3 a.m. or students may be too tired and/or too filled with "munchies" to enjoy it.
12. Banana splits offered and made by party organizers mid-evening may add to the success of the party.
13. Choose a band that agrees not to play music glorifying alcohol or other drugs.
14. Holding graduation ceremonies on Sunday afternoon may help reduce the amount of drinking that occurs after the event.

Resources for Further Information

Substance Education Program
Iowa Department of Public Instruction
Grimes State Office Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0146
(515) 281-3021

Governor's Highway Safety Office
Office for Planning and Programming
523 East 12th
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0146
(515) 281-3907

Iowa Substance Abuse Information Center
Cedar Rapids Public Library
428 3rd Avenue, S.E.
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52401
(319) 398-5133

Plans for the Future

Your ideas and recommendations regarding substance-free parties are always welcome. A description of your substance-free party which includes newspaper articles, posters, follow-up surveys, etc. is requested. Please forward your information to:

Dr. David A. Wright, Consultant
Substance Education
Iowa Department of Public Instruction
Grimes State Office Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0146

Comments/Recommendations:

Appendices

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APPENDIX A

Examples of Iowa Parties

Many Iowa communities have sponsored Project Graduation celebrations. Here are a few brief descriptions of some of the celebrations sponsored in recent years.

Wilton Community School District
1984 After Prom Party

For the second year, the Wilton Community School District worked with a group of interested parents in promoting an alternative party following the junior/senior prom.

The Wilton High School juniors host the prom, which consists of a dinner and dance until about 11:30 p.m. Parents made arrangements this year to rent a bowling alley for open bowling and free pop following the prom. The alley was open until about 2:30 a.m. A local bank offered to provide its basement, which included a large meeting room and kitchen facilities, as a site to serve breakfast. The group organizing the activities arranged for three video cassette players and showed six feature-length video films. Pop and chips were served during the event. Breakfast started at 3 a.m., and was served until about 6 a.m. The local bank also paid the cost of the food served at the breakfast.

The organizing group of parents collected donations to pay for the rental of the bowling alley, pop, chips and ice, and for the rent of video tapes. About $70 was left over, and will be used for a similar activity next year.

Cedar Rapids
Kennedy High School
After Graduation Party 1984

Four concerned community members worked very hard to put together Project Graduation parties all over Cedar Rapids and the surrounding area in 1984. Many high schools in Cedar Rapids sponsored Project Graduation parties, including Cedar Rapids Kennedy. The parent committee approached the school board and each school principal, and the representatives of the senior class at each school. After gaining that support, they went to the community to raise funds for the joint effort.

The Kennedy PTA worked with the senior class core committee to listen, suggest, advise and help put the plans for the party together. The parents emphasized that this was the students' party, not one that was being planned for them by adults.

The Kennedy party was held at the Cedar Rapids Central YMCA the night of graduation, from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. the following morning. The students could use the entire YMCA facility for activities like swimming, basketball, volleyball, racquetball, video games, weight lifting and dancing. In addition, a big screen television and videocassette recorder were used to play four movies. A casino event with play money operated, with the play money then used to buy auction items. A variety of food was available all evening, and breakfast was served at 5 a.m.

About 190 seniors and their dates or friends attended the party. Over 40 parents, teachers and adult friends served as chaperones, working all night or in shifts. Many other parents and community members volunteered to set up, clean up or provide extra food.

Students seemed to have a great time, and made a special effort to thank the parent organizers. A senior keg party planned for that night was cancelled. It keenly increased community awareness of the drinking problem.

Spencer After-Prom Party 1983

Our After-Prom Party was a great success. There are about 360 juniors and seniors in Spencer's high school. Out of the two classes, 280 young people took part in prom night. They went to the show, bowling, or to the YMCA (which we rented) for Vegas night. The show and bowling were at the same time, so students had to choose. At 2 a.m., there were 180 at the show and 100 at bowling. By 3 a.m., 180 students had come to the Y (many had to go home).

We had parents at all locations (don't use too many). We received both money and gifts from parents, businesses, friends and service groups to pay for this night; the entire city was behind the event.

We didn't have a problem with anyone all night. They had a real good time and conducted themselves like ladies and gentlemen.

A group of parents started the After-Prom Night idea and it grew. So that more students would participate, the planning wasn't school affiliated. The school worked with the parents, and the student council was asked for input.

Tickets were sold for $3 per person. The planners felt if students spent their own money, they would participate. They had to have a ticket to get into all activities that night.

The first 100 students who came to the Y received a T-shirt with APP' 83 printed on it. Vegas Nite was used for students to earn play money to use at the auction held at 5 a.m. Grand prizes were a color TV, electric typewriter and cash. Contributions were used to buy the action items.

Breakfast was served from 5 - 6 a.m. (the party ran until 7 a.m.).

After prom, students were surveyed to see if they wanted changes. Some did, but all or most wanted the party again next year.

Because of the cost, the planners sent thank you letters to all service groups and special friends. The letters also asked that they put the After-Prom Party in their budgets for the spring of 1984.

Las Vegas Night After-Prom Party
Ankeny Community Schools
1983

The Ankeny Community Schools have a 10- to 15-person advisory council for each building. These people are appointed by the principals of the respective buildings, and they meet once a month to express thoughts, ideas, clarifications, rumors or questions that could help make a good school a better one.

The Senior High School (grades 10-12) advisory group had questions about the junior-senior prom being held in Des Moines at a hotel or motel, with the many ramifications of what this can encompass. The advisory group discussed, with the principal, the possibility of setting up a "Las Vegas Night" within the high school facility after the prom in Des Moines. Permission was granted, and the advisory group, along with other parents, began to prepare for the evening. Their responsibility began after the prom ended at 12:30 a.m.

A fund-raising committee raised $2,400 to pay for the evening. The equipment was rented from a local entertainment firm. Merchandise for an auction was purchased locally at wholesale or below cost. Pop, candy, sandwiches, apples, milk, cake and chips and dip were available all evening. A disc jockey was there to play records, although there was no dancing.

The Las Vegas Night started at midnight at the Senior High School in Ankeny. Any junior or senior could attend, whether they were at the prom or not. There were 250 juniors and seniors who came back to the school, and once they were in the building, they could not leave and come back in again.

Each student received $100,000 in play money between 12:30 a.m. and 1 a.m. This amount was reduced by $25,000 each half hour for those coming in after 1 a.m. In attendance were one plainclothes police officer, two voluntary faculty members, and 80 parents. The parents served as dealers, etc. The tables were closed at 3 a.m., with an auction held to sell items to the highest bidder based on the amount of cash they had.

The party provided an alternative for those who desired to continue the evening or those who did not attend the prom to have some place to go, under supervision, and in a substance-free environment. Class officers, parents and participants were very pleased with the evening. It was an exciting finale for prom celebration.

APPENDIX B

Sample Media Releases

Here are some samples to use in promoting your Project Graduation celebration in the media. Tailor these samples to fit your needs and plans. A reminder: it's usually best to hand-carry press releases to local news editors and broadcasters. Explain the project to them personally, and encourage them to promote it. For other suggestions, see page 9.

Note on preparing copy: Always double-space press releases and public service announcements on one side of plain white or letterhead paper. Make sure you include the name, address and phone number of a person to contact for more information. A "30" or "#" mark at the end of your release indicates to the editor that this is the end of the copy.

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) are often aired on radio and television at no charge to community and non-profit groups. Provide the media with brief, concise "ads" they may read over the air. You can send two or three PSAs at the same time.

PROJECT GRADUATION COMMITTEE
River City Community High School
River City, Iowa
April ___, 1985

For more information, contact:
Susan or Mike Smith, chairpersons
111 Main Street
River City, Iowa 255-0000

Safe Prom Night Party Planned

Students, parents, community leaders and teachers are gathering together to plan a safe, fun way to celebrate the 1985 River City High School Prom. They're planning an after-prom party that includes casino games, dancing, music, food and prizes, but strictly prohibits the use of alcohol or drugs.

"Unfortunately, kids in the past often drank heavily before or after the prom. Using alcohol or drugs can get to be a tradition," says Susan Smith, chairperson of the committee planning the party. "We're starting a new tradition with an all-night after-prom party where drinking isn't allowed."

About 30 people have volunteered their help so far for the many tasks involved in planning the party. Area merchants have donated door prizes, and an auction is being planned, Smith says.

The party is part of a statewide campaign to promote substance-free graduation and prom parties, Smith says. Several other Iowa communities are planning similar parties.

"Hopefully, we'll be cutting down on the dangers of drinking-and-driving accidents that often occur during May and June," Smith says. "River City hasn't been hit by a tragic accident involving high school students in some time, but we've been lucky." About eight students are killed every May and June in drinking-and-driving accidents in Iowa, she says.

Smith says volunteers are still needed for food, posters, and chaperones for the party, and encourages anyone interested in helping to call her at 255-0000.

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PROJECT GRADUATION COMMITTEE
River City Community High School
River City, Iowa
March _____, 1985

For further information, contact:
Mike or Susan Smith, chairpersons
111 Main Street
River City, Iowa 255-0000

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Get involved in making the 1985 River City High School prom safe, fun and substance-free. Work with others in the community to plan an after-prom party. For more information, contact Susan Smith, 255-0000.

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Drinking-and-driving accidents could ruin the 1985 River City High School prom. Don't endanger your life or anyone else's. Attend the after-prom party, where dancing, games, food and fun are in, but drinking and drugs are out. Call 255-0000 for more information about the after-prom party.

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Start a new tradition in River City. Keep drugs and drinking out of the 1985 high school prom celebration. Students, parents and educators are planning an after-prom party that will be substance-free and lots of fun. For more information, call 255-0000.

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Sample Newspaper Editorial

Graduation Night

For any parent, it is a terrible thing to contemplate and an awful, impossible thing to live with—the tragedies that seem, inevitably, to accompany the excitement and pride of high school graduation week.

Parents try their best to explain the facts of life, and booze, to kids. Forbidding alcoholic beverages, preaching temperance, warning of the consequences of drinking and driving—all of it works, a little, but none of it can completely overcome the irresistable social pressures, the coercive peers, the temptations unleashed on any high school student, especially this time of year.

Some kids listen, some of them don't; but every parent knows that it only takes one time, one party, one concession to the crowd and a drunken trip behind the wheel to snuff out a life that was given so much love and held so much promise.

The next month is a period of high anxiety for thousands of parents who have invested time and money and personal sacrifice in the life of a child who is becoming an adult. They know about the keg parties, the camps, the rented motel rooms and apartments that will be crammed with drunken kids, their kids, with car keys in their pockets.

This year, parents in a number of Iowa communities who were tired of feeling powerless and able to do nothing more than pray and watch the clock on graduation night, determined to do something. They decided to offer their child, and every child, an alternative to alcohol at graduation time. They committed themselves to a program that would show kids they don't need booze to have a good time. Maybe they'd save a life in the bargain.

In (your town). . .

The program deserves the support and participation of young men and women who will be graduating—especially the student leaders in the school. If there is ever a time that visibility, popularity and leadership mean anything, it is at graduation time.

But if this program is going to have the appeal it must have to attract these students, its organizers need the support of this community. They need funds from donations, they need chaperones, fund solicitors, people who will donate food, baked goods, and drinks for the receptions and parties—the whole gamut, from the open wallet to the helping hand.

It is an opportunity for parents and grandparents to do more than feel helpless. All they need to do is contact the high school, volunteering their contribution of time, or money, to a very important cause.

Sure, there will be other parties. Certainly, this is a small step. But someone has to take it if there is ever to be a reduction in the awful human cost of high school graduation festivities.

APPENDIX C

Examples of Letters

You'll need to promote your party to many people in many ways. One effective way to reach people directly is through personal letters. Volunteers can stuff and address envelopes for letters to parents, students, community leaders and others. Here are some samples of letters other communities have used. Mold them to fit your situation.

Parent Letter from Principal

Dear Parent,

Once again, we are nearing the end of another school year. On (date) , your son or daughter will be joining the other members of his or her class in our graduation exercises. This is a very exciting time for these young people as they look ahead to the future, and back at their years here at (school) .

It's an exciting time for parents also. You have watched your child grow over the years both physically and emotionally. I am sure that there were times when you wondered if you could survive the four years, but now the big day is near.

For us at (school) , it is also an exciting time. All the preparations are well underway for what we hope will be one of our best graduations. However, there is always apprehension during this period that something is going to happen to mar this happy occasion. Many of the students are planning parties, cookouts, trips and other activities. As a part of these preparations, many of the students are planning to include alcoholic beverages. Another key element in these preparations is the use of an automobile. It is this combination that causes our greatest concern.

We do not condone the use of alcohol by students, but we are realistic enough to know that some will use it. Our question is: how can we keep these students off the highway? Basically, this becomes a task for the parents and students together. Parents should work with their children to form plans that can provide a chance to celebrate without drinking. If kids are going to drink, you must ensure that they won't be driving.

Here at (school) , we are trying to educate the students to the dangers of drinking and driving. We are also providing for them an alternative graduation party. Many of the seniors have been planning (activity) . This will be an after-graduation, chemical-free party that will take place (when & where) . This is a free party for all members of the class of '85 and their dates.

One other very important step that we will take is the enforcement of our drug use and abuse policy. Any senior that violates our policy on alcohol and other drugs, (that is, gets caught at a school function using or possessing alcohol or other drugs) will not be permitted to graduate with his or her class or to participate in any of the graduation exercises. However, these individuals may pick up diplomas the day after graduation.

By working together, we can make this the great experience it is meant to be.

Sincerely,

Principal/Superintendent

Parent Letter from Class President

Dear Parents:

Graduation time is quickly approaching and with it comes the traditional events and parties. In an attempt to avoid the disastrous results which can occur when one mixes drinking and driving, we will be having a "dry" graduation party this year. We have joined with the Substance Abuse Committee in planning, organizing and raising funds for this event.

The committee has hired (band name) , a very popular local band, which will be a great attraction. The party will be at (place) on (date) . Students will have access to all the facilities including the pool, sauna, hot tub, games, volleyball, and the paddle tennis court, as well as dancing. Refreshments served throughout the evening will be followed by a full breakfast. The party is open to seniors, juniors and their guests.

This is (school name)'s first annual dry graduation. Similar parties have been immensely successful in other towns. The committee estimates that the cost of the party will be $ (amount) . Although we have planned fund raisers, we need your help to reach our goal. If individuals can support this project with a $5 or $10 contribution, we will be well on our way to reaching our goal. Checks should be made payable to (name) .

In addition to financial support, we are looking for people to contribute some time and energy the night of the party as chaperones. If you can help or have any questions and ideas, please call me in the evening at (phone) .

Your help and enthusiasm will ensure a fun graduation!

Sincerely,

Class President

Letter From Law Enforcement

Dear Parents:

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate you and express my best wishes on your son's or daughter's graduation. It is a time of great hope and rejoicing as each of our students embarks on a new stage of life.

I am concerned, however, that this commencement period not be marred by accidents that cause needless injury, and perhaps death, to even one of our students. Especially tragic are the accidents which are clearly preventable, such as those which involve the use of alcohol or other drugs.

The (city) Police Department asks that students be particularly careful and responsible in their use of automobiles and aware of the effect that using alcohol and other drugs has on their driving capabilities. As a concerned parent, you can help this effort by discussing the issue with your son or daughter, sharing your concern and exploring options for dealing with difficult situations that may arise. Many drinking, drug-taking and driving situations involve peer pressure. For example, if the driver drinks, you may wish to offer your son or daughter the option of calling you for a ride home. It is important that you plan in advance for alternate transportation arrangements, because once people are under the influence of alcohol, they tend to believe they are O.K. and can even drive better. All evidence is to the contrary.

I would also like to take this opportunity to make you aware of a graduation party being planned by members of the senior class. This party will be held after graduation at (site) . It is being called a "dry graduation party." No alcohol or drugs will be allowed. The full facilities at (site) will be available as well as an excellent dance band. I strongly recommend that you, as a responsible parent, urge your son or daughter to take advantage of this opportunity to make his or her graduation a truly memorable and safe experience.

Again, let me extend my congratulations and best wishes for future health and happiness to your graduating senior.

Very truly yours,

Chief of Police

Letter to Area Businesses and Churches

Dear _____,

Project Graduation was conceived to provide an alcohol-free alternative to the traditional drinking parties that seem to have become the accepted form of celebration following prom and graduation. Far too often, the future potential of young adult lives and the happiness of special events have been marred by the tragedy of drinking-and-driving accidents. We hope to implement a substance-free celebration in our community to prevent such tragedies.

The (committee) is planning a substance-free prom/graduation party as a joint school, family, community and business project. Several communities have been very successful in their efforts. We see this as an exciting opportunity to provide a substance-free, wholesome, and safe prom/graduation celebration for the young people of (town) .

We are planning an exciting (event) . . .

Our budget for the project is $ (amount) . There are no public funds available for our project, and we must raise the full amount from donations. We are hoping that the (town) business community will help us carry out this project.

Donations for the substance-free party should be made out to (name) . If you would prefer to donate merchandise or gift certificates that we might use for door prizes, that would also be greatly appreciated. For tax purposes, we will provide the appropriate receipt for your donation. We have included a stamped/addressed envelope for your convenience. Please help us with this project.

Sincerely,

Chairperson

Parent Letter from Committee

Dear Parents of Seniors,

Commencement week and Project Graduation are nearly here, and there is much to be done. We very much need the active involvement of senior parents in order for Project Graduation to live up to its full potential as a safe, sane, and chemically free alternative celebration the night of graduation. We still need:

1. Financial support - We will need $ (amount) to complete this project successfully, so we are asking senior parents to help us raise this money. If you can do so, please send donations in the accompanying self-addressed envelope. A check made out to (name) is an investment in your son's or daughter's safety at graduation and is a tax-deductible donation. Can you help?

2. Door prizes - If you have a business and would like to donate either gift certificates or merchandise that we could use as door prizes, that would be a big help. Just check that item on the enclosed "Help Sheet," and someone on the team will contact you.

3. Organizational help - We will need the assistance of a great many parents in decorating, preparing and serving food, supervision, and clean up. If you would like to assist with these arrangements, your help would be deeply appreciated. Please complete the accompanying "Help Sheet" and return it to the high school office, and a member of the committee will contact you.

4. Food - Donations of sandwich materials, salads, desserts, and snack food are needed. It takes a lot of food to keep students at an all-night celebration. If you can assist by donating food, please complete the "I can provide" section of the "Help Sheet" and return it to the high school office, and a member of the committee will contact you.

5. Your presence - Graduation is a time for celebration and sharing, and we want you to share a part of the evening with your sons and daughters. Please plan to attend the early part of the evening for an informal, fun-filled celebration. If you plan to dance, sneakers are a must. If you'd like to play tennis, you'll need your sneakers and tennis racket.

Please let us hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

Committee Chairperson

Encl. Help Sheet and envelope

PROJECT GRADUATION - 1985 Friday, June _____

HELP SHEET

Name(s) _____ _____
Phone

We can help with (circle one or more)

Phoning	well before June _____	
Decorations	8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.	Friday
Serving	9:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m.	Friday & Saturday
Serving	1:00 a.m. to 3:00 a.m.	Saturday
Serving	3:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m.	Saturday
Clean-up	6:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.	Saturday
Refreshment committee	will meet prior to Project Graduation for planning.	

I can provide a door prize or prizes (circle one or more)

Gift certificate Merchandise

I can provide food (circle one or more)

Sandwich Materials

Salad

Dessert

Snack Foods

For planning purposes: Parent(s) will/will not attend Project Graduation.
(circle one)

Please return this form to the high school office by (date) , and thank you for your help!

RELEASE/CONSENT

Please have this form filled out and returned to us by (date) . We need this information for our planning and for legal protection. All forms that are turned in by (deadline) will be eligible for the drawing of the first door prize. After we receive these forms we will be issuing tickets for the Project Graduation celebration.

Turn these in to the Guidance office. Thanks.

1. All graduates and dates will come drug and alcohol free.
2. Parents will be called to come and get graduates and dates if rule #1 is violated.
3. Police will deal with any legal violations according to state law.
4. A graduate and date may leave but may not return until 5:45 a.m. with parent for breakfast.
5. Smoking will be allowed in designated areas.
6. Decent behavior will be expected.

Detach and return to Guidance office by (date) .

Graduate's Name _____ ____Check if you will attend.

Date's Name _____ ____Check if you are bringing a date.

B.B.Q. Graduates and dates invited. 8 p.m. Number Attending ____

Breakfast Graduates, date and parents of graduates are invited.
Number Attending ____

I hereby give permission for _____
(graduate's name)

to participate in the Project Graduation celebration at the (site) . I understand that if they leave they will not be allowed to return except for breakfast with a parent.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

Home Phone _____

Emergency Phone _____

APPENDIX D

Iowa Drinking and Driving Data

People are often misinformed about drinking-and-driving statistics. Make planning committee members and the rest of the community aware of the statistics. Be informed of the facts to answer questions from the news media.

April and May Statistics for Drinking and Driving Accidents for Iowa Teens (13-18 years)

	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983/1984*
Accidents	254	173	178	186	121	98/109
Injuries	108	81	72	78	58	53/65
Fatalities	8	3	5	8	6	5/1

*Project Graduation Implemented In Several Communities

Teenage Drinking and Driving Fatalities in Iowa by Blood Alcohol Content (BAC)

	.005 - .049	.050 - .079	.080 - .099	.100 - .129	.130 - .199	.200 Up	Totals
1981	5	4	3	7	19	5	43
1982	3	7	2	9	5	4	30
1981-1982	8	11	5	16	24	9	73

APPENDIX E

Relevant Iowa Law Excerpts

Know the law, and encourage local law enforcement agency personnel to enforce it before, during and after the celebration. Make parents and students aware of their liabilities.

Excerpts from Iowa Law

Here is a summary of Iowa laws pertaining to the possession and use of alcohol and other drugs by minors, and to adult responsibility for the use of alcohol and other drugs by minors. For more information, please contact an attorney or local law enforcement agency.

1. **Minor in Possession of Alcohol**
   Any person under the age of 19 who has alcohol in his/her possession on any street or in any public place may be guilty of a simple misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to $100 or imprisonment of up to 30 days. (Section 123.47 *Iowa Code*).

2. **Illegal Consumption of Alcohol by a Minor**
   It is unlawful for any person under the age of 19 to consume alcohol unless it is done under the direct supervision and approval of the minor's parents in the privacy of their own home. Consumption of alcohol by a minor under any other circumstances is a simple misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to $100 or imprisonment of up to 30 days. (Section 123.47 *Iowa Code*).

3. **Parental Liability - Alcohol**
   Any parent or other adult who furnishes alcohol at a private party might be liable in a civil action for monetary damages. If someone suffers personal injury or property loss through the actions of an intoxicated minor, the adult who supplied the alcohol might be held responsible for the injury. The *Iowa Code*, Section 123.49 does not specifically state this fact; however, it does prohibit providing liquor to a minor and a court precedent establishes the right to claim damages from anyone who directly or indirectly causes injury and/or damages while violating the law. A parent or adult who furnishes alcohol or other prohibited materials to a minor may also be guilty of contributing to the delinquency of a minor. Such offense is a misdemeanor. (Section 233.1 *Iowa Code*).

4. **Driving While Intoxicated**
   It is unlawful for a person under the influence of intoxicating liquor to drive. Driving while under the influence of alcohol is a serious misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to $1,000 and imprisonment of 2 days mandatory and/or up to one year or both for first offense. Also, they could be denied their license for up to 120 days. Subsequent offenses result in greater penalties and fines. Loss of license can be six years upon conviction of third offense drunk driving. (Section 321.281 plus amended 321.281 *Iowa Code*).

   Court rulings in the past do not distinguish a minor from an adult for the purposes of enforcing Chapter 321 (motor vehicle section) of the *Iowa Code*. These interpretations make minors eligible for the same penalties as adults for violations of the motor vehicle code.

5. **Illegal Transportation of Open Liquor**
It is illegal to open a liquor container in a moving vehicle, but currently, it is not illegal to transport an open liquor container in a moving vehicle if the container was opened prior to transportation. This makes prosecution for an open container in a moving vehicle virtually impossible. Legislation is currently pending to establish a law prohibiting open liquor containers in a moving vehicle (Section 123.28 *Iowa Code*).

6. **Possession of Cannabis (Marijuana)**
It is unlawful for any person to knowingly possess marijuana. The possession of a small quantity of marijuana (an amount small enough to be considered for personal use) is a serious misdemeanor which may result in a fine of up to $1,000 and/or imprisonment of up to six months. Penalties are greater if the quantity confiscated exceeds an amount for personal use. It is also unlawful to possess controlled substances (narcotics, prescription drugs, hallucinogenic chemicals, etc.) and such possession carries even greater penalties than the possession of marijuana. (Section 204.401 *Iowa Code*).

7. **Parental Responsibility for Actions of Children**
The parents of an unemancipated minor child under the age of 18 are liable for damages caused by the unlawful acts of the child up to $1,000. This would include liability for injuries caused by the minor while under the influence of drugs or alcohol. (Section 613.16 *Iowa Code*).

8. **Distribution of Controlled Substance to a Minor**
A person who is 18 years of age or over who distributes a substance to a person under 18 years of age is guilty of a class "B" Felony (5-25 years imprisonment) or a class "C" Felony (10 years imprisonment) depending on the substance distributed. (Section 204.406 *Iowa Code*).

Modified excerpts from: Helping Services for Northeast Iowa, Inc. "Straight Talk About Parties and the Law," 1982.